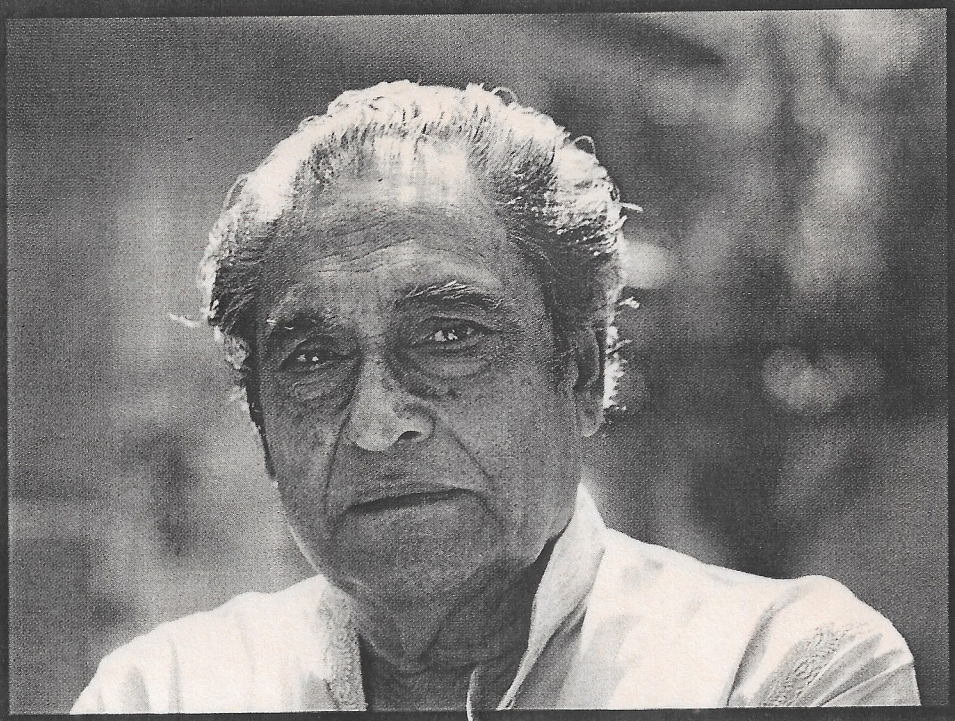
ASHOK KUMAR

The Legend Endures...



On December 10, the Hindi film industry witnessed the loss of a legend of all times. Proficient actor Ashok Kumar passed away at his Chembur residence after a prolonged illness.

Hailing from a **zamindar** family, Ashok Kumar was a qualified law graduate from Calcutta. The eldest of the three brothers, Dadamoni, as he was fondly called by all in the film industry, incidentally bagged his first role in **Jeevan Naya** (1936) when director Himanshu Roy forced him to replace the original lead since he'd fallen ill. And ever since, his immense talent took him to meteoric scales of fame and won him nationwide adulation almost instantly.

The first of its kind, **Achhut Kanya**, in which he played the role of a Brahmin boy in love with an untouchable (played by Devika Rani), brought him a lot of critical acclaim. Very few in the industry can boast of such a versatile line-up of roles the way Ashok Kumar has had all through his career. Be it playing the cigar-smoking detective, or the deglamourised singer, or even the upper class barrister, what was most prominent was that he looked-n-played each character with much elan.

Tampering with one's 'heroic' image is something that many big stars never dared even in their peak days. But Ashok Kumar was probably the first hero who dared to play a negative role in **Kismat**, in spite of his well-wishers pleading him against this move. He also played negative roles in **Aarti**, **Jewel Thief** and **Ustadon Ke Ustad**.

Awarded the national award in 1969 for his role of a pained grandfather in **Ashirwad**, Ashok Kumar was one of the very few actors who gracefully moved to character roles. Even in films like **Kanoon**, **Oonchey Log**, **Khubsoorat**, **Mili**... where he played character roles, Dadamoni left a lasting impact on everyone's mind.

'g' mourns the loss of one of the veteran actors of the Hindi film industry and pays its tribute to the actor whose memory will remain alive in the hearts of millions forever.

—Ritu M g